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Understanding Individual Differences Antecedents of Impulse Buying Behaviour

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to understand the effect of impression management (IM) on impulse buying Behaviour(IBB). It is a centrally held attribute, which triggers motivation for buying behavior. Given the subconscious prevalence of IM, it has been observed that consumers are sophisticated users of this attribute. Various impression management concerns arise when consumers choose products to share with others. Whether the chosen products are consistent or inconsistent with self-images, depends on the consumer's social goals, approvals and self-perception. A larger proportion of this cognition occurs beyond the conscious control during the purchase situations. It is found that in situations when buyers do not have enough knowledge about the brand, self attributes like impression management asserts a noticeable impact on IBB. The study borrowed assumptions from impression management theory and concluded that impulse buying behavior was attributed to impression management in collectivistic culture. The major focus of this study was to assess that how consumers, predominately, attempt to use impression management in impulsive buying situations.

Keywords: Impression Management, Impulse Buying, Collectivistic Culture, Cognition, Self-Perception.

Introduction

The idea that brands have some attributes which are beyond their functional utility is of special importance for marketers. It tells that customers seek something congruent with their belief system and other than their functional utility, products/brands have many dimensions which are equally perceived by the customers based on impression other people hold about them(Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Salleh et al., 2013). It was a major contribution for studying why consumers shall or shall not buy brands of products impulsively which are seemingly alike. This effort on the part of consumer was mainly important for preferred brands of socially consumed products such as cigarettes and soft drinks, although this was assumed that these products might not be consistent with buyer's self-characteristics (Landon Jr, 1974). Marketers are often interested in ads that promote positive self-images about consumption because they want to increase brand sales(Solomon, 1983). However, the theory-based predictions and findings have largely remained unchanged. This provided a sufficient evidence to study impulse buying behavior(IBB) which is a complex phenomenon demanding theoretical underpinning at trigger, action and consequence phases (Amos et al., 2014; Xiao & Nicholson, 2013; Huang, Dastane, Cham, & Cheah, 2024). Though a considerable research effort has focused upon psychological determinants of compulsive and impulsive buying disorders (Billieux et al., 2008; Claes et al., 2010; Mueller et al., 2011; Otero-López et al., 2011; Otero-López & Villardefrancos, 2013), vet the personality and individual differences causes pertaining trifling impulse buying behaviour leading to compulsive buying are still demanding more work to be done in this area(Bratko et al., 2013; Lucas & Koff, 2014), but empirical findings have largely

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been equivocal. Ahmad et al. (2019) revealed individual differences variables namely fashion involvement, impulse buying tendency, shopping enjoyment, hedonism and self-esteem and concluded that marketers might focus on strategies aimed at these individual differences to trigger spontaneous buying behaviour in consumers. Drawing more to individual urges Dhandra (2020)contributed that self-esteem, dispositional meaningfulness and impulse buying behaviour were interconnected. So, our study objective was to determine the relationship between impression management, ideal self-congruence, personal fear of invalidity and impulse buying behaviour (Otero-López, , Santiago, & Castro, 2021).

Theory and Hypotheses

Impression management theory explains motivations behind complex human interactions and performances (Leary, 2019). The core ideas of the theory is how individuals create, maintain, defend and usually enhance their social identities (Goffman, 2006). Impression management (IM) is goal-directed attempt to influence others' perceptions about a person, a group, and/or an organization regarding an object or event by providing self-assessed beneficial information in social interactions (Schlenker, 1980). The goal for the aforementioned attempt is to gain an advantageous first impression. The motive for this goal is based on the assumption that the target audience's impressions about the individuals, groups, or organizations become reality of the target audience. The scholar also coined the term self-presentation for behavior which was supposed to project personal attributes based on IM.

Apparently, meaningless action are often meant to strategically convey the best of individual attributes during social interaction (Rosenfeld et al., 2002). Dolich (1969) found that choice of a brand was relevant to comparing and matching the images of said brand with self image of the buyer. It gave a higher level of satisfaction because some important aspects of consumer behavior were related to it not only for products but also for colors, people, companies and socio-cultural issues (Goffman, 2006). Greenwald and Banaji (1995) postulated that much of the social behavior occurs unconsciously and implicitly in contrast to the previously held belief that it is under conscious control. This also showed that customers discriminated among different brand users in the same product category. That is why users of one particular brand perceived users of other brands in the same product category differently. It can further be elaborated that if number of options in any brand category is not limited by manufacturers or buying power of the consumer, there is a probability of more congruent findings because consumers buy to make themselves happy. Hence self-congruity determines consumer choice(Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2012). Hosany and Martin (2012) suggested that image congruence influenced the consumer's satisfaction indirectly because consumers acquired certain knowledge and skill through socialization process which determines how they will buy and consume brand. This established the reason to moderate IM and IBB with individual differences variables. Therefore, the study introduced personal fear of invalidity (PFI) as moderator (Badgaiyan et al., 2016). According to literature, non-verbal communications is a major source of conveying product experiences. This non-verbal communication is triggered with or without goal activation(Wilcox et al., 2009). The scholars argued that customers are intentionally involved in non-verbal communication to mark their attachment with a particular product or brand. This self-presentation through brand is meant to attain social approval and its usage pertinent to an attention getting manner is employed as an impression management strategy by consumers (Ferraro et al., 2013; Shutaleva, Novgorodtseva & Ryapalova, 2022). Their research presented many examples of conspicuous consumption of brands like showing new iPads just to be witnessed, for example. Thus, it is seldom that a purchase decision is made on consumers' own judgment, actually it is a choice driven and influenced by other people around and most of the times consumers are not aware of this interesting underlying phenomenon. Hence, purchasing is attributed to social environment(Tanner et al., 2007). Emergence of social media has forced the marketers to broaden their concepts of individual differences as the generation Y is categorized the heaviest user of it and present consumers like to pose themselves with product brand they prefer most on You Tube video of Face book page(Libai et al., 2010).

Online networking sites have caused a gross root level change in the magnitude of customers' connectedness (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006). It has increased the possibility of consumer driven influences in marketing at a larger scale(Blazevic et al., 2013). The scholars discovered that impression management sets its holders at ease by providing them with scripts about what to buy and what not to buy. Consumers also think that how their actions of selecting different brands will be interpreted by peers and others. But applying from a marketer's perspective may further enhance their use in consumer behavior. This led to assume that.

H1: Impression management is positively associated with impulse buying behaviour

Research provides sufficient argument pertaining to influence of ideal-self on buying behaviour, particularly on brand attachment and generally about social consumption and firms adopt many strategies to create connections between brands and ideal-self of consumers (Park et al., 2010). Cosmetic companies still stress the consumers that consuming their products will surely lead them closer to feel their ideal complexion (ideal-self) and make them eye-catching and pretty. It certainly hit the consumers' nerves and they form an inseparable relationship with products (Malär et al., 2011). Therefore, it is hypothesized that.

H2: Ideal-self-congruence is significantly positively associated with impulse buying behaviour

Consumers always try to look the recognition of the choice of brand from people around them. The objective of this activity is to avoid the distortion of their impression in the minds of other people. Self-concept studies reflects that consumers prefer brands which assert an impression of them in society. Educated people are more sensitive to this issue and they try to choose a brand which maintains their impression. Pertinent behavioural patterns are used by individuals to protect, maintain and create desired images. Impression management involves striving for changing the impression held by others in social transactions. Individuals use many tactics to accomplish this task which include complimenting the audience (Proudfoot, Wilson, Valacich, & Byrd, 2018; Beka, 2013; Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). Assertive and defensive impression management are accomplished by people which are meant to create and repair image respectively (Tedeschi & Norman, 1985). Elusive customers are persuaded by the vendors and impression marketing is used as tool to attract the customers through targeting the promotional efforts at these aspects (Grove & Fisk, 1997). Appearance-based criteria is vital to convey the dominant impression of the individuals, and consequently they nevertheless feel very much drawn towards things which are meant to enhance their impression(Kenny, 2004). Needs for clarity and structure drove behaviour of many individuals but others might be more conscious about unbearable cost of committing mistakes. They tend to avoid potential mistakes and having a greater concern about personal fear of invalidity, this resistance is reflected through cognitive hesitancy (Kruglanski & Freund, 1983; M. M. Thompson et al., 2001). So, it is hypothesized that.

H3: Personal fear of invalidity moderates the relationship between impression management, ideal-self and impulse buying behavior

Methodology

Framework for Study

Figure 1: The Review of Literature Led to Postulate Following Framework.



Target Population

High salaried class of corporate sector employees was included in the study. There are a lot of pesticide firms, banks and general trading firms in Southern Punjab. It is the most congested region of the country as Punjab represents almost 45 percent population of Pakistan and a 50% portion of workforce resides here (Pakistan Economic Survey, 2017). The reason to decide on this universe is that these people have, to some extent, a greater decision-making power in case of purchasing goods & services for themselves & their families.

Sampling procedure

Stratified random sampling was used (Sekaran, 2006). Lists of firms were obtained from chamber of commerce and every third, (and fourth in case of unwillingness of third to respond) employee was approached for data collection. It was a cross section design.

Data Collection

An orientation session was conducted for a short span of time. During this session, the nature and importance of the variables was explained to the respondents. This approach is titled as self-administered survey(Saunders et al., 2009). The authors distributed 530 questionnaires out of which 237 were received which ensured 44.7% response rate. But 17 were rejected in analysis due to inappropriate filling.

Data Analysis

Correlations were computed to look for direct effects and regression was applied to assess the moderation effects (Otero-López & Villardefrancos, 2013; E. R. Thompson & Prendergast, 2015). Reliability and multicollinearity were also computed. The researchers used SPSS version 23.

Instrumentations

The authors adopted all the measures for this study from prevailing scales. All the items were assessed on Likert scale.

Impression Management (IM)

Pancer (2013) constructed a scale to measure the inferences about impression management since there was not any existing scale. The scholar based the scale on pertinent theoretical constructs available in previous research(Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). The scale consists of six items.

Ideal Self Congruence (ISC)

Following the assumption that self-congruence was a gestalt like, holistic perception, We used Sirgy et al. (1997) scale to measure ideal self-congruence as adopted by (Malär et al., 2011) because the scholars found that such method as focuses upon the self-congruence and its psychological experiences directly, it might be a valid predictor of a variety of consumer behaviour instances such as attitude towards a brand or brand preferences as compare to orthodox measures like discrepancy indexes in mathematics. The scale contains two items which were slightly modified by just change of speech (Koo et al., 2014; E. R. Thompson & Prendergast, 2015).

Personal Fear of Invalidity (PFI)

Personal Fear of Invalidity (PFI) scale was adopted from M. M. Thompson et al. (2001). It is a fourteenitem scale bearing extraordinary internal consistency.

Impulse Buying Behaviour (IBB)

The study adopted a 5-item scale which was introduced by E. R. Thompson and Prendergast (2015) comprising of items based on existing impulse buying measures (Amos, Holmes, & Keneson, 2014; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001). The scholars selected those items which directly mirrored cognitive impulse buying. Piron (1991) formulated the definition of this type of impulse buying as being "unplanned, unreflective, spontaneous purchasing". Items related to affective impulse buying (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001) were intentionally dropped by (E. R. Thompson & Prendergast, 2015). This modification was made to apply the items to impulse buying behavior during past two months (e.g. I never bought things I didn't plan to buy, I purchased some things on impulse without thinking, I thought twice before committing myself to purchases, I always stuck to my shopping list, I frequently made unplanned purchases).

Analysis and Results

An overall analysis of data shows the following results;

Reliability statistics depicts value for Cronbach's Alpha .788 which satisfies the criteria to proceed further. The value is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics.

•	Cronbach's Alpha		N of Items
.788		27	_

Multicollinearity Issue

When IBB considered as dependent variable, the VIF value computed for impression management is 1.411, for ideal self-congruence (ISC) it is 1.436 and for personal fear of invalidity (PFI) is 1.288, Table 2.

Table 2: Coefficientsa.

	Model	Collinearity Star	Collinearity Statistics		
	Model	Tolerance	VIF		
	Impression_Management	.709	1.411		
1	Ideal_Self Congruence	.696	1.436		
	PFI	.776	1.288		
	a. Dependent Vari	able: IBB			

Likely, multicollinearity was computed for IM. VIF values for ISC, PFI and IBB are 1.782, 1.354 and 1.952 respectively. The computed values meet the established criteria, Table 3.

Table 3: Coefficientsa.

	Model	Collinearity Stat	istics
Model		Tolerance	VIF
	Ideal Self Congruence	.561	1.782
1	PFI	.738	1.354
	IBB	.512	1.952
	a. Dependent Variable: Im	pression_Management	

While putting PFI as dependent variable, the VIF value for IM, ISC and IBB are 1.438, 1.865 and 1.893 respectively. These values also satisfy the standard to decide there exists multicollinearity or not, Table 4.

Table 4: Coefficientsa.

	Model	Collinearity Sta	Collinearity Statistics		
	Wodel	Tolerance	VIF		
	Impression_Management	.695	1.438		
1	Ideal_Self Congruence	.536	1.865		
	IBB	.528	1.893		

a. Dependent Variable: PFI

As shown in Table 5, VIF value for IM is 1.401, IBB 1.563 and PFI 1.381 while having ISC as dependent variable. Overall, as VIF value is below 3, so there is no issue of Multicollinearity as with VIF above 3 we may or may not have the Multicollinearity issue and if it is above 5 then we are very likely that we have Multicollinearity and if it is above 10 than we have Multicollinearity issue between variables.

Table 5: Coefficientsa.

	Model	Collinearity Sta	tistics
	Model	Tolerance	VIF
	Impression_Management	.714	1.401
1	IBB	.640	1.563
	PFI	.724	1.381
	a. Dependent Variable: Idea	al_Self Congruence	

Regression

The amount of variance in IBB that accounted for or explained by IM and ISC is 51.2% which seems in acceptable range, Table 6.

Table 6: Model Summarvb.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.716a	.512	.505	.25421

Table 7: Correlations.

		Impression_Management	Personal Fear of Invalidity	Ideal_Self Congruence	Impulse Buying Behaviour
	Pearson Correlation	1	.400**	.496**	.507**
Impression_Management	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	220	220	220	220
	Pearson Correlation	.400**	1	.418**	.497**
Personal Fear of Invalidity	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	220	220	220	220
	Pearson Correlation	.496**	.418**	1	.654**
Ideal_Self Congruence	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	220	220	220	220
	Pearson Correlation	.507**	.497**	.654**	1
Impulse Buying Behaviour	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	220	220	220	220

^{**.} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Impulse buying behaviour is significantly, positively and moderately correlated to Impression Management where $r = .507^{**}$ Thus, H1 is accepted. Impulse buying behaviour is significantly, positively and moderately correlated to Idealself congruence where $r = 0.654^{**}$ It ensures that H2 is accepted.

Moderation Analysis

Regression analyses was applied in order to assess the moderation effects between IM, ISC and PFI. It

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Table 8: Coefficientsa.

Model	Unstandar	dized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	_	Sig.
Model	В	Std. Error	Beta	- ι	
(Constant)	1.881	.137		13.690	.000
1 Impression_Management	.108	.085	.130	1.272	.205
PFIbyIM	.080	.018	.450	4.394	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Impulso	e Buying Behavi	our			

The p-value for the potential moderator personal fear of invalidity (PFI) and independent variable impression management (IM) is .000 which means the p-value for the interaction term is very small and it indicates a significant interaction which is equilant to say that there is a moderation effect between IM and PFI

Table 9: Coefficientsa

Model		Unstandar	dized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients		S:~
	Model	В	Std. Error	Beta	- ι	Sig.
	(Constant)	1.485	.119		12.502	.000
1	Ideal_Self Congruence	.301	.070	.379	4.303	.000
	PFIbyISC	.058	.015	.333	3.774	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Impulse Buying Behaviour						,

Similarly, p-value for the potential moderator personal fear of invalidity (PFI) and independent variable Ideal self-congruence (ISC) is .000 which means a significant interaction equilant to say that there is a moderation effect. Hence, it proves H3 that PFI moderates the relationship between impression management, Idealself congruence and impulse buying behaviour, Table 8 and, Table 9.

Discussion

Contribution of individual differences variables has long been recognized but main focus remained was the study of state affect (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). But research on trait affect and its relationship with impulse buying behaviour revealed contradictory findings (Silvera et al., 2008; Verplanken et al., 2005). But previous research evidence also supports the notion that impulse buying behaviour is an outcome of dysfunction of self-regulation (Claes et al., 2010; Rook, 1987; Vohs & Faber, 2007). According to Baumeister (2002), upkeeping of self-regulation is contingent upon individual's capacity to resist an impulse, self-monitoring and adherence to goal. Apparently, these are out of conscious control and unlikely to serve individuals simultaneously. Henceforth, self-regulation may fail and consequently lead to impulse buying behaviour, for example, (a) ego depletion reduced impulse resistant behaviour, (b) sentient self-monitoring of purchasing and its pertinent outcomes are suspended or (c) at that time, longterm goals(corresponding to money saving) no more existed to keep to as surely these were suppressed by interim goals ostensibly attainable through unplanned purchasing. That is why, several compulsive and impulsive behaviours are linked to self-regulation failure (Magar et al., 2008). Blazevic et al. (2013) included non-verbal communication in their broader concept of consumer driven influences (CDI) and found that product experience can also be shared non-verbally because non-verbal communication might be driven and occurred with or without goal activation. Consumers' engagement with non-verbal communication to chase a stimulated objective results in forming certain associations the product or brand they use and this attempt is further motivated by self-presentation objectives (Wilcox et al., 2009). The scholars also postulated that the aim of such product or brand association is to attain social approval for choices because consumers think that product or brand stands for their social status. Thus, the empirical findings of our study support our H1 that impulse buying behaviour is associated with impression management as products/brands are used to gain attention and consumers actively pursue the strategy for managing impressions.

Consumers frequently employ self-image management through consuming the products/brands publicly and several examples are available in this context(Ferraro et al., 2013; Piwinger & Ebert, 2001). For example, iPads may be used to be viewed by other people around or sending own pictures on facebook with a particular product/brand. This is, perhaps, one of the reasons that cosmetic companies have long based their promotional campaigns arguing that their products will make them close to consumers' ideal vision(Agneta, 2018; Malär et al., 2011; Park et al., 2010). So, the importance of ideal-self congruence in marketing stands still as there are a lot of consumers which prefer products/brands which reflect an ideal aspiration for them instead of actual reality (Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Malär et al., 2011; Sirgy, 1982). In their classic study Malär et al. (2011) discovered the situational use of ideal-self to create emotional attachment with the brand though extant research has yielded that consumers preferred products/brands that correspond to their real self-image (Koo et al., 2014; Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy & Samli, 1985). In case of luxury products, it was established by (Blazevic et al., 2013; Han et al., 2013; Han et al., 2010) that people tend to attire themselves by using luxury brands of clothes so that they might associate or disassociate themselves with the group they do or do not belong to. It is initiated by the need of craving affiliation to any specific group such as the apple community or elite social status through communicating. Hence, our empirical findings for H2 are supported as motivation for sharing experiences is triggered undoubtedly if there exists a strong desire to be affiliated with certain group. Blazevic et al. (2013) postulated that in situations where impression management, self-presentation or affiliation was activated or not, there is a greater probability of using impulsive or reflective processing system. Reflective processing is generally categorized as more conscious, therefore, impulsive system tends to generate inducements for associative links and resultantly a behavioural pattern takes place without existence of any motivational force (Blazevic et al., 2013; Strack & Deutsch, 2006). The research evidence also supports that no or diminutive cognitive effort is needed by impulsive system Strack and Deutsch (2004) and that is why products are bought without considering the reasons for their thinkable consumption and is equally true for fashion products also (Blazevic et al., 2013; Cook & Yurchisin, 2017).

E. Thompson et al. (1992) defined fear of invalidity as, "the fear to make judgmental errors". Although individuals consciously try to reduce fear of invalidity through vigorous information search, yet efforts may be put in to decrease this search also to avoid contradictions in alternatives and varying amount of information (Vermeir, 2003). This might be the reason that PFI has moderated between impression management, ideal-self congruence and impulse buying behaviour, H3. M. M. Thompson et al. (2001) demonstrated that higher stages of PFI resulted in increased inconsistencies in behaviour of the people about an array of social matters and its role as as moderator in management studies has been established by (Rietzschel et al., 2007). The scholars also established that inclination towards gathering huge information regarding the situations an individual is confronted with, did not decreased the level if inconsistency generated by individuals with high PFI. Hence, we suggest that cost of judgmental errors push the consumers towards maintaining impressions that they think best convey their self-congruences.

Conclusion

Though external environment has, and still occupies core importance to attract consumers for increasing sales revenues, the focus is gradually shifting towards looking deep into individual differences, personality, cognitive and reflective processes. We observed that causes for suspension of thinking

processes while impulse buying are rooted inside individual. Thus, we based the origin of our study on impression management and ideal self and found that variations in the written shopping lists occur even consciously viewing label information, promotional campaigns, TV commercials and top of the list, the budget. Fear of invalidity might compress all these by facilitating path ways to go for impression management inferences and self-congruencies.

Implications

It may serve as an alternative to traditional consumer and personality perspectives. A greater operative impact may be sought in impulse buying behaviour by generating similarities of these factors in product/brand images, as some brands targeted to self-esteem and remained successful.

Limitations of Research

Many limitations exist. The data was collected from universe belonging to different professions and age group, but only high-income people were approached so there is a risk that it may not be a sufficient number of respondents in such a study. Future research may tell that if there is a greater similarity between the products, it may be easy to formulate a domain of generalized personality and self attributes that are helpful in assessing the consumers' impulse buying behaviour. So, a combination of self-esteem (both lower and higher) and insecurity may be exploited in further research in an effort to understand impulse buying behaviour.

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